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Equity Sensitivity Revisited: Contrasting Unidimensional and Multidimensional Approaches

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Abstract
Purpose Past research has shown little support for direct relationships between equity sensitivity and various equity-relevant criteria. Recent work by Davison and Bing (J Manag Issues 20: 131–150, 2008) suggests that equity sensitivity consists of separate input- and outcome-focus dimensions and that these dimensions are associated with such criteria in an interactive fashion. The current study extends this research by theoretically strengthening and empirically testing their two-dimensional model.
Design/methodology/approach We surveyed adults who were working at least 30 h a week at three time periods to temporally separate measurement of predictors and criteria ($n = 172$).
Findings Results provide support for the two-dimensional model. Input and outcome focus interacted to explain variance in individuals' satisfaction and self-reported job performance even after controlling for demographic characteristics, personality, and social desirability. By contrast, the original ESI only significantly predicted one of 10 dependent variables.
Implications Whereas a ratio has been historically used as the basis for evaluating equity, employing independent dimensions and investigating their interaction seems more appropriate to assess individuals' equity sensitivity. The current study suggests a multidimensional measure of equity sensitivity may better reflect the original theoretical underpinnings of the construct.
Originality/value The current study enhances our understanding of equity theory in general, and equity sensitivity in particular, by drawing attention to the multidimensional nature of the equity sensitivity construct. In particular, it extends the work of Davison and Bing (J Manag Issues 20: 131–150, 2008) by revisiting Huseman et al.'s (Acad Manag Rev 12: 222–234, 1987) original conceptualization of equity sensitivity. In doing so, we broaden its utility as a potential unique predictor of organizationally relevant criteria.

Keywords Equity · Equity sensitivity · Fairness · Big 5 · Social desirability

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Introduction

Largely due to the influence of Adams's (1963, 1965) seminal work on equity theory, organizational researchers have devoted much attention to issues of justice and fairness. As individuals and as employees, we are concerned with how much we get (outcomes) in proportion to how much we contribute (inputs). According to equity theory, we then compare this ratio with that of another individual to determine whether the situation is equitable. When things are inequitable and the ratios are unequal, we are motivated to bring this equation back into balance.

Despite the widespread acceptance and application of Adams's theory, Huseman et al. (1985) were among the first to challenge its basic tenets. They questioned the notion that all individuals are equally sensitive to equity. Rather, they believed that individuals have different perceptions of and reactions to inequity. Consequently, Huseman and colleagues classified individuals into one of three categories based on their preferences for equity: Benevolents, Entitleds, and Equity Sensitives.

In their seminal *Academy of Management Review* article, Huseman et al. (1987) expounded the equity sensitivity construct, which "suggests that individuals react in consistent but individually different ways to both perceived equity and inequity because they have different preferences for (i.e., are differentially sensitive to) equity" (p. 223). They first distinguished individuals according to their absolute preferences by noting Benevolents' preference for high levels of inputs and Entitleds' preference for high levels of outcomes. Individuals were then characterized according to their preferences in relative terms. In particular, whereas Benevolents prefer their inputs to exceed their outcomes, the opposite is true for Entitleds. Equity Sensitives, consistent with the traditional view of equity theory, prefer their inputs and outcomes to be equal. Finally, Huseman et al. defined equity preferences in relation to a comparison other. They posited that Benevolents prefer their outcome/input ratio to be less than that of the referent, Entitleds prefer their ratio to exceed the referent's, and Equity Sensitives prefer their ratio to equal the referent's. Thus, according to Huseman et al., equity exists when a situation matches an individual's own internal standard of equity and when it is congruent with their preferences vis-à-vis the comparison other (p. 228).

Unfortunately, research surrounding the equity sensitivity construct has seldom sustained this conceptualization. Extending directly from Adams's (1965) theorizing, initial equity sensitivity work struggled to find support for relationships proposed according to equity principles (e.g., Huseman et al. 1985; Miles et al. 1989). Though researchers later attempted to explain these inconsistencies by redefining equity sensitivity as a tolerance for, but not necessarily a preference for, inequity (King et al. 1993), equivocal findings continued (e.g., Allen and White 2002; Zellars and Kacmar 1999). As a result, researchers have begun to reconceptualize equity sensitivity at the theoretical level and have attempted to improve its operationalization through enhanced measurement (Davison and Bing 2008; Foote and Harmon 2006).

From a theoretical standpoint, it may be that by considering equity sensitivity in terms of preferences for both inputs and outcomes, a clearer and more parsimonious picture of equity sensitivity emerges. Davison and Bing (2008) recently offered a multidimensional framework by revising Huseman et al. (1987) original conceptualization of equity sensitivity. In particular, Davison and Bing noted that Huseman et al.'s propositions lend themselves to a 2×2 typology whereby individuals are classified according to their relative preferences for inputs and outcomes (see Fig. 1). Such an approach involves separating preferences for inputs and preferences for outcomes into two distinct dimensions of equity sensitivity. Such partitioning, they reasoned, may allow for greater prediction of organizational criteria. Specifically, they maintained that an input-focused dimension would better predict input-focused criteria, an outcome-focused dimension would better predict outcome-focused criteria, and that these two dimensions would interact in predicting other equity-relevant criteria.

The importance of conceptually matching predictor and criterion variables has been argued increasingly in the organizational literature (e.g., Hogan and Holland 2003). An input focus, which signifies an individual's affinity for making meaningful contributions at work, therefore seems likely to predict levels of effort or performance on the job. Alternatively, an outcome focus indicates a primary concern for the receipt of rewards and relatively little regard for the input component of the equity exchange. As such, an outcome focus may better predict a key work-related outcome in terms of equity preferences: job satisfaction.

In addition to conceptual issues regarding equity sensitivity's dimensionality, other researchers have raised methodological concerns about the construct's operationalization (e.g., Foote and Harmon 2006). The pursuit of improved measurement stems mainly from the deficiency of the primary measure of equity sensitivity, the Equity Sensitivity Instrument (ESI; Huseman et al. 1985), which was designed to assess equity sensitivity as a unidimensional construct. As such, Davison and Bing (2008) noted that the ESI fails to capture all possible sensitivities to equity based on their multidimensional framework. For each of the instrument's 5 items, two statements are given, an entitled response and a benevolent response. Respondents are asked to indicate their level of agreement with

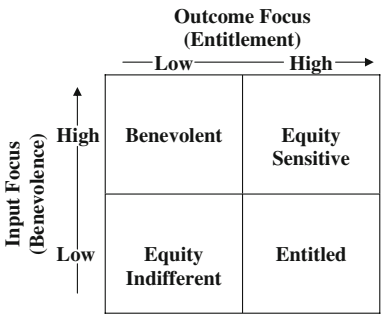

Fig. 1 Davison and Bing's (2008) proposed two-dimensional model of equity sensitivity

each statement by distributing 10 points between the two. Item 1, for example, reads, "In any organization I might work for, it would be more important for me to: (a) get from the organization, (b) give to the organization." Theoretically, an entitled person would give the majority of the points to the entitled response, a benevolent person would give the majority to the benevolent response, and an equity sensitive individual would assign five points to each response.

To illustrate the possible measurement imprecision encountered when using the ESI, two hypothetical scenarios are provided. In the first scenario, Subject A prefers low levels of inputs and low levels of outcomes, whereas Subject B prefers high levels of inputs and high levels of outcomes. Given the ESI's ipsative rating format, each subject is obliged to indicate an equal preference for inputs and outcomes (i.e., score each a "5"), and therefore, both would be categorized as Equity Sensitive. In the second scenario, Subject C prefers moderately high inputs and high outcomes, whereas Subject D prefers low inputs and high outcomes. Since both subjects would indicate that they prefer their outcomes to exceed their inputs, they would be categorized as Entitled. In both scenarios, the subjects display different preferences, but are labeled identically by the ESI.

Concerned that the ESI would not adequately measure their multidimensional conceptualization of equity sensitivity, Davison and Bing (2008) separated each pair of original statements and presented them as single-stimulus items. Responses to these single-stimulus items could then be analyzed separately to assess independent dimensions of input and outcome orientation. With this approach, the subjects in the examples above would appropriately yield different scores on input- and outcome-focused dimensions, perhaps reflecting their true differences in equity preferences. The new measure may also uncover potential differences based on the interaction between these separate dimensions. Thus, a multidimensional measure of equity sensitivity may better reflect the original theoretical underpinnings of the construct, and the additional information it provides may enhance content and criterion-related validity.

Davison and Bing (2008) made a notable contribution by reconceptualizing equity sensitivity theory; however, their empirical testing included only one outcome-focused criterion (obsession with money) and no input-focused criteria. Indeed, equity sensitivity research benefits from their novel interactive perspective but, given that inputs and outcomes are the essential elements of equity theory (Adams 1965), future research must test both input- and outcome-focused criteria to further validate a multidimensional model of equity sensitivity. The idea that an input or outcome focus may have differential effects on equity-relevant criteria is reflected in past experimental research that has manipulated inputs and outcomes separately in laboratory settings (e.g., King et al. 1993; Sauley and Bedeian 2000).

The purpose of the current study is to extend the work of Davison and Bing (2008) in several ways. First, we further developed the theory underscoring the need for separate equity preferences by revisiting Huseman et al.'s (1987) original conceptualization. More specifically, our earlier discussion of absolute and relative preferences highlights the rationale for and the appropriateness of Davison and Bing's new multidimensional measure. Next, we are the first to employ this new measure to test any input-focused criteria (i.e., five facets of job performance), and we introduce dimensions of job satisfaction as additional outcome-focused criteria beyond obsession with money. Finally, we assess the incremental validity of these relations by controlling for demographic variables, Big 5 personality traits, and two dimensions of socially desirable responding. Doing so provides a more stringent test of equity sensitivity and broadens its utility as a potentially unique predictor of organizationally relevant criteria. Overall, then, we hope to bring much needed clarity to the questionable nature of the construct's dimensionality and measurement.

Inputs, Outcomes, and Equity Sensitivity

Inputs

According to tenets of equity theory (Adams 1965), individuals may attempt to restore equity by manipulating their inputs (e.g., reduced effort expenditure). Likewise, social exchange theory (Blau 1964) posits that individuals who perceive their work situation as unfavorable (i.e., inequitable) seek to balance exchange relations. Although equity sensitivity research does not draw explicitly on social exchange theory, Blau notes that the intervening mechanisms underlying social-exchange processes are based on expectations of fairness. Research employing a social-exchange perspective has found that individuals are more inclined to decrease their work effort (Colbert et al. 2004; Harris et al. 2007), withhold citizenship behaviors (Zellars et al. 2002), and exhibit deviant behaviors (Perugini et al. 2003) to restore balance in their social-exchange relationships. Thus, individuals high in benevolence may alter their work contributions (inputs), as they have been described as altruistic and selfless "givers" (e.g., Huseman et al. 1987).

Although benevolent individuals would seem more likely to contribute to an organization through effort and productivity, empirical evidence has been equivocal. Allen and White (2002), for instance, hypothesized that

differences in equity sensitivity would lead to differences in input reduction when individuals were under-rewarded. Using the ESI to measure equity sensitivity, they were unable to distinguish Equity Sensitive individuals from their Benevolent or Entitled counterparts. Conversely, more recent work (e.g., Scott and Colquitt 2007) has reaffirmed prior results regarding direct relations between equity sensitivity and various input-related behaviors. Taken together, these findings suggest that one could expect a unidimensional measure of equity sensitivity to have relatively limited relations with inputs. As Davison and Bing (2008) contend, relations with various criteria may be made more explicit when separate dimensions of input and outcome focus are jointly considered.

Accordingly, when input and outcome orientations are treated as separate dimensions of equity sensitivity, they may exert interactive effects on input-focused criteria. Following the logic offered by Davison and Bing (2008), we expect input orientation to have a stronger positive relationship with relevant input-related criteria among individuals also low in outcome orientation (i.e., Benevolents, see Fig. 1), whose selflessness and giving nature stimulate motives to contribute to the organization. Conversely, input focus will have a weaker positive impact among those individuals high in outcome focus. Whereas job performance is generally considered a consequence in organizational research, it might be viewed ambiguously in equity research. That is, "one individual might perceive 'doing challenging work' as an outcome, while another might view this job element as an input" (Huseman et al. 1987, p. 230). In the current study, we assess relations between input orientation and individuals' perceptions of job performance. As a result, we treat various aspects of job performance as meaningful input-related criteria because, in line with previous equity research (King et al. 1993; Scott and Colquitt 2007), employee effort, skill, and performance are generally considered important contributions in the workplace.

Some researchers have conceptualized job performance into three broad areas in which employees direct their motivation and exert effort at work: task, citizenship, and counterproductive performance (Rotundo and Sackett 2002). This multidimensional model of job performance captures a larger portion of criterion variance (Borman and Brush 1993) and provides a more comprehensive view of input-related behavior in the workplace. Although each of these input-focused behaviors relates to overall job performance, they may differ from one another with respect to equity sensitivity. More specifically, individuals with a high input focus should be more likely than low input focus individuals to manipulate their contributions (i.e., inputs) at work. As such, they might be more likely to contribute to the organization through task and citizenship performance, or by engaging in fewer acts of deviance. Due to equity theory's ability to explain and predict behavior in both interpersonal and organizational settings (King et al. 1993), we included behaviors directed at individuals and at an organization. In particular, we assessed equity sensitivity's impact on five input-focused criteria: task performance, individual-targeted citizenship (OCB-I) and deviant (DEV-I) behavior, and organization-targeted citizenship (OCB-O) and deviant (DEV-O) behavior.

A recent study by Scott and Colquitt (2007) provides insight into relations between equity sensitivity and each of these relevant input-related behaviors. They investigated how equity sensitivity, as measured by the ESI, moderated the effects of justice perceptions on task, citizenship, and counterproductive performance. In particular, Entitleds were suggested to respond more severely to injustice than Benevolents. Interestingly, equity sensitivity did not interact with justice perceptions to significantly predict any criteria. It may be that a two-dimensional measure of equity sensitivity would better predict relevant criteria than a unidimensional measure, such that separate dimensions of input and outcome focus may interact to reveal more explicit relationships with equity-relevant input criteria. According to equity sensitivity theory, Benevolents are more concerned with contributing to the organization and less focused on the receipt of rewards. Using a two-dimensional framework, then, input orientation should exhibit stronger relations with input-focused criteria among individuals with a low outcome focus. Among individuals who are higher in outcome orientation, the effects of an input focus on input-related criteria may be less pronounced. We offer the following hypotheses which suggest input and outcome focus will interact to predict various input-related criteria.

Hypothesis 1 Outcome focus will moderate the relationship between input focus and task performance (1a), OCB-I (1b), OCB-O (1c), DEV-I (1d), and DEV-O (1e), such that the relationship will be stronger when outcome focus is low.

Outcomes

Entitlement describes individuals as privileged "takers" who expect much while giving little in return. As entitled individuals care more about benefiting themselves than the organization, equity sensitivity theory suggests that these self-interested tendencies would translate to Entitleds' giving greater attention to and placing greater importance on outcomes. However, as with the preceding hypotheses, we suggest that the effects of an outcome orientation on outcome-focused criteria will depend on individuals' preference for inputs. Among individuals who are lower in

input focus, a stronger outcome orientation could more easily be displayed in terms of greater preference for outcomes and tolerance for over-reward. Among individuals with higher input orientations, the connection between outcome focus and various outcome-focused criteria may be weaker. As a result, we assess relations between outcome focus and a particularly important workplace outcome: job satisfaction. In particular, we explore the possibility that outcome focus will more strongly affect five specific satisfactions (i.e., job security satisfaction, pay satisfaction, growth satisfaction, social satisfaction, and satisfaction with supervisor; Hackman and Oldham 1975) under conditions of low input focus.

Past research has shown that direct relations between equity sensitivity—as a unidimensional construct—and job satisfaction are ambiguous. For instance, King et al. (1993) reasoned that Entitleds would be significantly more satisfied than Benevolents when over-rewarded because they are more focused on the receipt of outcomes than on the contribution of inputs. This hypothesis was not supported. Moreover, Zellars and Kacmar (1999) found that equity sensitivity did not predict differential reactions to favoritism and that levels of satisfaction with work, supervisor, and coworkers were not significantly related to equity sensitivity. Due to this largely inconsistent body of research, we explore whether a multidimensional conceptualization and measure of equity sensitivity might better predict these various aspects of satisfaction. Building on recent theoretical and empirical research, we suggest the potential interaction of input and outcome focus when predicting specific types of satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2 Input focus will moderate the relationship between outcome focus and job security satisfaction (2a), pay satisfaction (2b), growth satisfaction (2c), social satisfaction (2d), and supervisory satisfaction (2e), such that the relationship will be stronger when input focus is low.

Comparisons to the Original ESI

We are not the first to take issue with equity sensitivity measures in general (e.g., Foote and Harmon 2006) or the ESI in particular (e.g., Sauley and Bedeian 2000). Most recently, Davison and Bing (2008) suggested that a unidimensional conceptualization of the equity sensitivity construct may account, at least in part, for past measurement problems. The disconnect between theory and measurement, in turn, may partly explain previous inconsistent findings in the equity sensitivity literature (e.g., Allen and White 2002; Zellars and Kacmar 1999). As an initial attempt to explain the discordant findings, Davison and Bing modified the ESI by separating each set of paired statements and treated them as single-stimulus items. In doing so, they maintained that separate dimensions of input and outcome focus might better explain, either directly or jointly, important work attitudes and behaviors. As we note above, the separation of preferences into input and outcome components (1) corresponds with tenets of equity theory, (2) better reflects Huseman et al.'s (1987) original conceptualization of the equity sensitivity construct, and (3) has the potential to capture the full range of individuals' sensitivity to equity. In sum, we expect Davison and Bing's multidimensional measure of equity sensitivity to better predict equity-relevant criteria than the original ESI.

Hypothesis 3 The multidimensional measure of equity sensitivity will demonstrate superior predictive validity than the original ESI.

As noted above, we focus our efforts in the current study to replicate and extend past measure development research (viz., Davison and Bing 2008). For a new construct to be fully accepted in the field, however, it must explain variance that is not accounted for by other established constructs. Due to the prevalence of the Big 5 as the dominant framework for personality research, it is important for individual differences outside this framework, such as equity sensitivity, to demonstrate predictive validity above and beyond the Big 5. Therefore, if the criterion-related validity of equity sensitivity is to be credible then it should show incremental validity beyond the effects of other well-established person characteristics. In a similar vein, equity sensitivity is almost exclusively evaluated in the employment context. Due to concerns that personality assessment in the employment context may be biased by socially desirable responding (Morgeson et al. 2007), it is also necessary for equity sensitivity to show incremental validity beyond social desirability. Finally, controlling for demographic variables such as age, gender, race, and job experience will also help to demonstrate the unique contribution of equity sensitivity variables. Therefore, for each of the hypotheses, we evaluate the incremental validity of equity sensitivity by controlling for age, gender, race, job experience, social desirability, and Big 5 personality traits. In doing so, we test Davison and Bing's equity sensitivity framework and provide additional evidence of their new measure's validity.

Method

Sample and Procedure

Nine hundred undergraduate students in an introductory management course at a large university located in the southern United States were invited to participate in the study for partial course credit. To reduce the effects of

common method variance, three surveys were administered, with approximately 2 weeks separating each administration: control variables were collected first, equity sensitivity variables second, and the dependent variables (i.e., performance and satisfaction) third. For the two equity sensitivity measures (i.e., the original and single-stimulus ESI), the order of presentation was reversed in half of the surveys to eliminate order effects. To ensure candor, we informed participants verbally and in writing that their individual responses would be kept confidential, and that only aggregate data would be reported. We only included participants working at least 30 h per week to reflect a sample of working adults. As a result, 193 participants remained, of which 107 were male (55%) and 160 were Caucasian (83%). The average age of the respondents was 21.0 years, and they had an average of 5.2 years of part and full-time work experience. Fifty-one percent were currently employed at the time of data collection; they responded to performance measures with respect to their current job. The remaining 49% were not currently employed and therefore responded to the survey with respect to their most recent employment. For many, this referred to summer employment which ended 3 months prior to data collection. Due to missing data, the final sample was comprised of 172 respondents.

Measures

Respondents indicated the extent of agreement with statements for each measure on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*) unless otherwise noted. All measures—including the input measures of task performance, OCB-I, OCB-O, DEV-I and DEV-O—are self-reported. Though much research acknowledges the superiority of performance measures rated by others (e.g., peers, supervisors), in the current study, we were primarily interested in individuals' performance perceptions as a measure of input-related behavior.

Equity Sensitivity

Dimensions of input and outcome focus were measured separately using Davison and Bing's (2008) 10-item single-stimulus measure, but to avoid confusion, the word "more" was removed from each item because the inherent trade-off between entitlement and benevolence was no longer relevant. All items were prefaced with the phrase, "In any organization that I might work for." Sample items included, "It is important for me to give to the organization" (input focus) and "I am concerned about what I receive from the organization" (outcome focus). The internal consistency of the scores was .80 and .79 for the input- and outcome-focused dimensions, respectively. The original ESI was measured as described above. We followed Huseman et al. (1985) by summing the scores for the benevolent responses ($M = 26.25$, SD = 6.17, alpha = .82).

Task Performance

Task performance was measured with 3 items from Williams and Anderson (1991). Items included, "I adequately complete assigned job duties," and "I fulfill responsibilities specified in my job description." The internal consistency of the scores was .85.

Citizenship Behavior

Three items were taken from Williams and Anderson (1991) to measure each dimension of organizational citizenship behavior, OCB-I and OCB-O. Whereas the former category refers to those extra-role behaviors that aid specific individuals, the latter refers to discretionary behaviors that benefit an organization in general. Sample items included, "I go out of my way to help new employees" (OCB-I) and "My attendance is above the norm" (OCB-O). The internal consistency of the scores was .72 for OCB-I and .63 for OCB-O.

Deviant Behavior

Counterproductive work behaviors, both individually and organizationally directed, were assessed with 3 items each from Bennett and Robinson (2000). Sample items included, "I acted rudely toward someone at work" (DEV-I) and "I come in late to work without permission" (DEV-O). Internal consistency reliability coefficients were .76 for DEV-I and .77 for DEV-O.

Satisfaction

The five measures of job satisfaction were assessed with items from Hackman and Oldham's (1975) Job Diagnostic Survey. Respondents indicated the extent of satisfaction with each description on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *extremely dissatisfied*; 5 = *extremely satisfied*). Sample items included, "How secure things look for me in the future in this organization" (job security; 2 items), "The amount of pay and fringe benefits I receive" (pay; 2 items), "The amount of challenge in my job" (growth; 4 items), "The people I talk to and work with on my job" (social; 3 items), and "The amount of support and guidance I receive from my supervisor" (supervisory; 3 items). Internal consistency reliability coefficients were .67 for security, .80 for pay, .83 for growth, .70 for social, and .80 for supervisory satisfaction.

Controls

The Big 5

To determine whether equity sensitivity would provide incremental validity over global dispositional traits, we measured personality using the 50-item International Personality Item Pool (Goldberg et al. 2006), which assesses the aforementioned Big 5 dimensions of personality. Internal consistency reliability coefficients were .82 for conscientiousness, .77 for agreeableness, .87 for extraversion, .76 for openness, and .84 for neuroticism. Sample items included "I am always prepared" (conscientiousness), "I accept people as they are" (agreeableness), "I feel comfortable around people" (extraversion), "I enjoy hearing new ideas" (openness), and "I have frequent mood swings" (neuroticism).

Social Desirability

To allay concerns that the single-stimulus ESI format may be susceptible to socially desirable responding (Morgeson et al. 2007), we assessed social desirability with two scales from Paulhus's (1984) short-form measure. The first dimension, self-deception, taps unintentional or unconscious response distortion; the second, impression management, captures deliberate faking. Sample items included "People often disappoint me" (self-deception; 5 items) and "I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable" (impression management; 6 items). Indicative of questionable reliability, internal consistency reliability coefficients were .58 for self-deception and .44 for impression management.

In addition to personality and social desirability, we included demographic variables (i.e., age, gender, race, job experience, and current employment) to control for their potentially spurious effects. Past research has shown that such demographic characteristics can affect several of the study's focal variables (e.g., equity sensitivity—Shore et al. 2006; citizenship—Podsakoff et al. 2000).

Analyses

Before testing our hypotheses, we established construct and discriminant validity for the two-dimensional equity sensitivity measure by conducting confirmatory factor analysis. To obtain a more parsimonious measurement model, parcels were created for all constructs other than the two dimensions of equity sensitivity, for which all 10 items were used. Three parcels were created for each Big 5 trait and for both dimensions of social desirability with the single factor method, which includes items based on alternating highest and lowest factor loadings (Landis et al. 2000). This procedure yielded 21 indicators. With regard to the dependent variables, five parcels were created for each construct (job satisfaction and self-perceived job performance) using the content method by assigning items to their respective sub-dimensions (Landis et al. 2000). As a result, 10 additional indicators were created. This reduced set of indicators (41) was used to test nested model comparisons. The hypothesized 11-factor model (containing the two-dimensional measure of equity sensitivity, two measures of social desirability, the Big 5, job satisfaction and job performance) demonstrated a good fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 1{,}213$, $df = 724$, CFI = .90, RMSEA = .06) and was a significantly better fit than a 10-factor model in which the two-dimensional measure of equity sensitivity was combined into one factor ($\Delta\chi^2 = 229$, $\Delta df = 10$, $p < .001$, CFI = .86, RMSEA = .09). These findings provide additional support for the factor structure of the two-dimensional model of equity sensitivity beyond those of Davison and Bing's (2008) factor analyses by including social desirability, the Big 5, job satisfaction and job performance to the measurement model.

We performed hierarchical moderated regression analysis to test our hypotheses. Demographic control variables were entered first, Big 5 and social desirability measures were entered second, the main effects of input and outcome focus third, followed by the interaction term in the last step. Evidence of a moderating effect would be present if significant incremental variance in the dependent variable was explained when the interaction term was added to the regression containing only the main effects. Scores on the Big 5 traits and equity sensitivity were mean-centered. High and low regression lines (+1 and −1 standard deviation from the mean) were plotted (Aiken and West 1991).

Results

Means, standard deviations, internal consistency reliability coefficients, and intercorrelations are reported in Table 1. Most of the study's variables of interest showed high internal reliability coefficient alphas, with the exception of security satisfaction (.67) and OCB-O (.63). Reliability scores for the Big 5 control variables ranged from .76 to .87, but the social desirability controls demonstrated poor reliability (.44 and .58). As Table 1 indicates, the pattern of correlations corresponds closely to those reported in the literature. Input variables were related to input focus in the appropriate direction, but only the outcome variable of job security satisfaction was significantly correlated with outcome focus. In addition, the two dimensions of equity sensitivity were significantly related ($r = .23$).

Table 1 Descriptive statistics

	Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1	SAT-security	(.67)												
2	SAT-pay	.38	(.80)											
3	SAT-growth	.49	.45	(.83)										
4	SAT-social	.52	.32	.52	(.70)									
5	SAT-supervisor	.48	.47	.53	.51	(.80)								
6	Task performance	.36	.06	.19	.37	.26	(.85)							
7	OCB-I	.32	.07	.23	.43	.25	.52	(.72)						
8	OCB-O	.41	.16	.22	.30	.25	.63	.56	(.63)					
9	DEV-I	.04	−.13	−.06	−.06	−.22	−.17	−.02	−.17	(.76)				
10	DEV-O	−.31	−.17	−.22	−.23	−.25	−.47	−.35	−.67	.34	(.77)			
11	Input focus	.22	.10	.18	.27	.16	.34	.40	.32	−.12	−.29	(.80)		
12	Outcome focus	.19	−.00	−.03	−.01	.04	.17	.07	.23	.19	−.08	.23	(.79)	
13	Original ESI	.08	.05	.22	.23	.14	.13	.31	.08	−.20	−.16	.46	−.45	(.82)
14	Conscientiousness	.07	.12	.09	.10	.03	−.03	−.01	.14	−.15	−.16	.15	−.08	.19
15	Agreeableness	.00	.15	.21	.19	.16	.08	.22	.11	−.29	−.22	.29	−.24	.38
16	Extraversion	.07	.05	.14	.16	.08	.02	.26	.00	.05	−.04	.11	−.06	.25
17	Neuroticism	−.05	.00	−.04	−.03	−.14	.09	−.08	−.01	.06	.02	−.06	.04	−.08
18	Openness	−.01	−.05	−.02	.05	−.01	.05	.21	.11	−.01	−.08	.16	−.04	.16
19	Social desirability (SD)	.07	−.06	.03	.07	.05	−.10	.10	−.04	−.07	−.01	.04	−.12	.16
20	Social desirability (IM)	.05	−.00	.20	.08	.21	−.00	.19	.06	−.37	−.17	.19	−.24	.30
21	Age	.06	−.01	−.03	−.09	−.05	.05	.04	.07	−.04	−.08	−.01	−.00	−.06
22	Gender	.01	.05	.03	.17	.07	.21	.24	.16	−.21	−.21	.19	−.05	.13
23	Race	−.09	−.02	−.13	−.05	−.17	.00	−.00	.05	−.06	.01	.01	−.09	.05
24	Job experience	.16	−.11	−.07	−.06	−.13	.17	.08	.15	.07	−.18	.01	−.02	.04
25	Current employment	.10	−.05	−.04	−.07	−.23	−.03	−.05	.08	.13	−.09	.01	.00	.03
Mean		5.01	4.71	4.61	5.41	4.96	4.14	3.83	3.91	2.71	2.05	3.83	3.58	26.25
Standard deviation		1.36	1.68	1.39	1.22	1.36	0.71	0.72	0.67	1.04	0.85	0.58	0.64	6.17

	Variable	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
1	SAT-security												
2	SAT-pay												
3	SAT-growth												
4	SAT-social												
5	SAT-supervisor												
6	Task performance												
7	OCB-I												
8	OCB-O												
9	DEV-I												
10	DEV-O												
11	Input focus												
12	Outcome focus												
13	Original ESI												
14	Conscientiousness	(.82)											
15	Agreeableness	.29	(.77)										
16	Extraversion	.19	.14	(.87)									
17	Neuroticism	−.22	−.35	−.36	(.84)								
18	Openness	.14	.28	.25	−.07	(.76)							
19	Social desirability (SD)	.21	.24	.45	−.67	.10	(.58)						
20	Social desirability (IM)	.25	.59	.07	−.28	.23	.23	(.44)					

Table 1 continued

	Variable	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
21	Age	−.08	−.13	−.20	.11	−.01	−.09	−.10	–				
22	Gender	.11	.24	.12	.21	.18	−.09	.17	−.08	–			
23	Race	.08	.16	−.06	.01	.09	−.04	.19	−.04	.06	–		
24	Job experience	.01	−.08	−.02	−.01	.02	.08	−.11	.69	−.11	−.07	–	
25	Current employment	.18	.08	−.06	−.06	.05	.07	−.00	.20	−.02	.15	.42	–
Mean		3.47	3.55	3.59	2.50	3.42	3.27	3.04	20.97	0.48	1.34	5.19	.50
Standard deviation		0.61	0.52	0.67	0.61	0.57	0.63	0.49	2.29	0.50	0.93	2.91	.50

Listwise $N = 172$. Numbers in parentheses are internal consistency reliabilities

Correlations ≥.15 significant at .05 level; ≥.20 at .01 level; ≥.25 at .001 level

In line with previous theory and empirical evidence, regression results (Tables 2, 3) demonstrated stronger main effects for input orientation than for outcome orientation when predicting input-related criteria (i.e., job performance). The outcome focus measure, however, did not outperform the input focus measure when predicting main effects for the outcome-related criteria (i.e., satisfaction). Specifically, the main effect of input focus significantly predicted four of the five criteria: task performance, OCB-I, OCB-O, and DEV-O. The outcome focus main effect, on the other hand, significantly predicted job security satisfaction. Interestingly, the input focus main effect was also significantly related to job security satisfaction and social satisfaction.

The first set of hypotheses predicted that input and outcome orientation would interact to predict various input-related criteria. Specifically, we expected relations between input focus and input-focused behaviors to be stronger when outcome focus was low. Table 2 illustrates the results of the regression analysis. As indicated in the table, interactions with task performance, OCB-I, OCB-O, and DEV-O were statistically significant, supporting Hypotheses 1a, 1b, 1c and 1e, respectively. These interactions are illustrated in Figs. 2, 3, 4 and 5 which demonstrate that outcome focus moderated the relationship between input focus and the input-related behavior, with a stronger positive (negative for DEV-O) slope for individuals low in outcome focus.

Recall that the second set of hypotheses predicted that input and outcome focus would interact to predict outcome-related criteria. Specifically, we expected that the relation between outcome focus and outcomes would be stronger when input focus was low. Table 3 illustrates the results of the regression analysis. As Table 3 indicates, interactions with job security satisfaction and social satisfaction were statistically significant, supporting Hypotheses 2a and 2d. These interactions are illustrated in Figs. 6 and 7, which demonstrate that input focus moderated the relationship between outcome focus and the outcome, with a positive slope for individuals with a low input focus.

Hypothesis 3 predicted Davison and Bing's (2008) multidimensional measure to demonstrate better predictive validity than the original ESI. Analyses involving the original ESI measure revealed correlations of .46 and −.45 with the single-stimulus input- and outcome-focused measures, respectively, which correspond to those found by Davison and Bing. We then performed hierarchical moderated regression analysis: demographic control variables were entered first, Big 5 and social desirability measures were entered second, and the ESI was entered in the third step. Results revealed that, of the 10 dependent variables, the ESI only significantly predicted OCB-I ($p < .01$), and it did not predict any outcome-related criteria, supporting our contention that a two-dimensional measure of equity sensitivity might provide greater predictive validity. These results are presented in Table 4.

Discussion

Our study examined the interactive effects of separate input- and outcome-focused dimensions of equity sensitivity on various equity-relevant criteria. We hypothesized and found support for interactions between equity sensitivity dimensions with input (i.e., performance) as well as outcome (i.e., satisfaction) criteria. The finding that an input focus has more impact on input-focused criteria when the level of outcome focus was low suggests that these tendencies may not lie on opposite ends of a spectrum. The results from the first set of hypotheses (H1a–H1e) provide evidence for the notion that the effects of an input orientation on input-focused behaviors depend on one's outcome orientation. Figures 2, 3, 4 and 5 reveal that input focus had the strongest impact on task performance, citizenship, and organization-directed deviance for those individuals with low outcome orientations, supporting Hypotheses 1a,

Table 2 Hierarchical regression analysis—input criteria

Variable/model	Task performance				OCB-I				OCB-O			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Controls												
Age	−.14	−.16	−.17	−.16	−.06	.02	.02	.03	−.07	−.08	−.08	−.07
Gender	.23**	.20*	.17*	.18*	.26**	.19*	.15*	.16*	.18*	.17	.13	.14
Race	.03	.02	.04	.02	.01	−.01	.00	−.02	.05	.04	.05	.03
Job experience	.36**	.38**	.38**	.34**	.20	.15	.14	.11	.23*	.25*	.25*	.20*
Current employment	−.15	−.15	−.14	−.12	−.12	−.08	−.08	−.05	−.01	−.04	−.04	−.00
Big 5 and social desirability												
Conscientiousness		−.05	−.07	−.05		−.12	−.14	−.13		.11	.10	.12
Agreeableness		.12	.08	.08		.10	.04	.03		.03	.02	.01
Extraversion		.02	.00	.02		.23**	.22**	.23**		−.05	−.06	−.04
Neuroticism		.00	.02	.04		−.02	−.02	−.00		−.10	−.07	−.04
Openness		.01	−.02	−.02		.09	.07	.06		.07	.05	.04
Social desirability (SD)		−.13	−.10	−.07		−.04	−.02	.00		−.12	−.09	−.05
Social desirability (IM)		−.05	−.04	−.04		.12	.12	.13		−.02	.01	.02
Equity sensitivity												
Input focus (IF)			.27**	.92**			.31**	.92**			.23**	1.13**
Outcome focus (OF)			.12	.96*			.05	.85*			.19*	1.37**
Interaction												
IF × OF				−1.18*				−1.13*				−1.66**
Overall F	3.96	1.95	3.28	3.38	3.01	3.03	4.38	4.42	2.17	1.31	2.72	3.16
Total R^2	.11**	.13*	.23**	.25**	.08*	.19**	.28**	.30**	.06	.09	.20**	.23**
ΔR^2		.02	.10**	.02*		.10**	.09**	.02*		.03	.11**	.04**

Variable/model	DEV-I				DEV-O			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Controls								
Age	−.16	−.18	−.17	−.18	.07	.05	.06	.04
Gender	−.21**	−.16*	−.16*	−.16*	−.23**	−.18*	−.15	−.16*
Race	−.06	−.00	.00	.01	.01	.05	.04	.07
Job experience	.11	.08	.09	.10	−.25*	−.27*	−.26*	−.19
Current employment	.12	.15	.15	.14	−.00	.03	.03	−.03
Big 5 and social desirability								
Conscientiousness		−.09	−.08	−.09		−.10	−.09	−.12
Agreeableness		−.12	−.09	−.09		−.15	−.13	−.12
Extraversion		.09	.10	.10		.00	.01	−.02
Neuroticism		−.03	−.01	−.01		.00	−.01	−.05
Openness		.10	.09	.10		.02	.04	.05
Social desirability (SD)		−.08	−.07	−.08		.07	.05	.00
Social desirability (IM)		−.27**	−.25**	−.25**		−.07	−.08	−.09
Equity sensitivity								
Input focus (IF)			−.06	−.21			−.18*	−1.40**
Outcome focus (OF)			.11	−.09			−.10	−1.69**
Interaction								
IF × OF				.28				2.24**
Overall F	2.82	3.76	3.38	3.16	3.18	2.11	2.57	3.55
Total R^2	.08*	.22**	.23**	.23**	.09**	.14*	.19**	.26**
ΔR^2		.14**	.01	.00		.05	.05**	.07**

$N = 172$. Standardized regression coefficients are shown. ΔR^2 totals may not sum exactly to R^2 totals because of rounding error

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

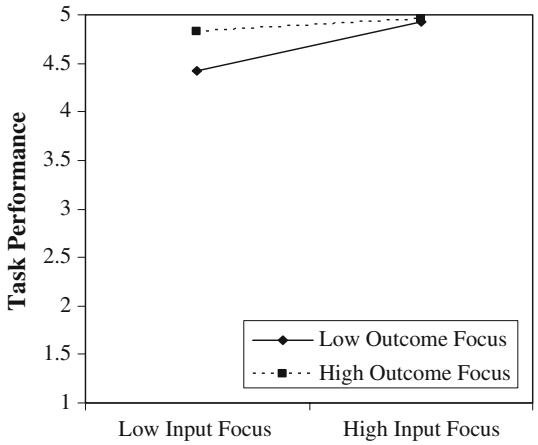

Fig. 2 The interaction of input and outcome focus in the prediction of task performance

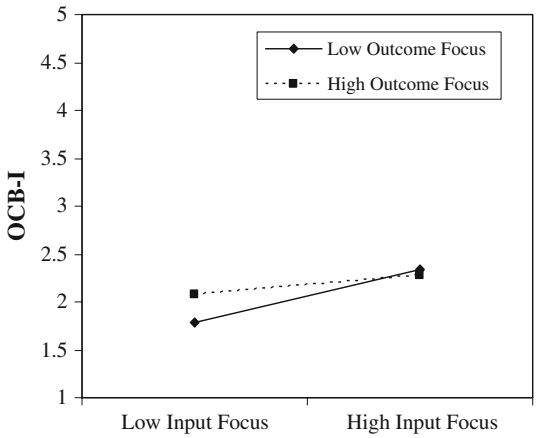

Fig. 3 The interaction of input and outcome focus in the prediction of OCB-I

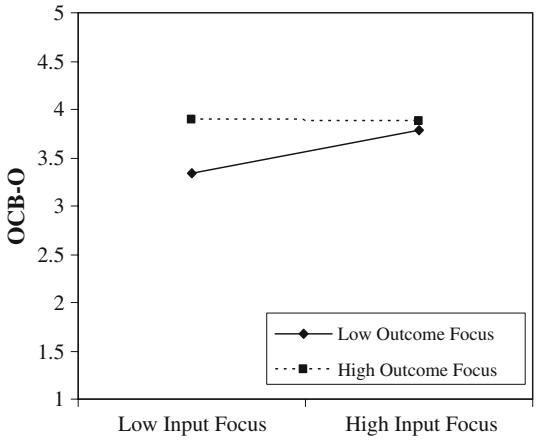

Fig. 4 The interaction of input and outcome focus in the prediction of OCB-O

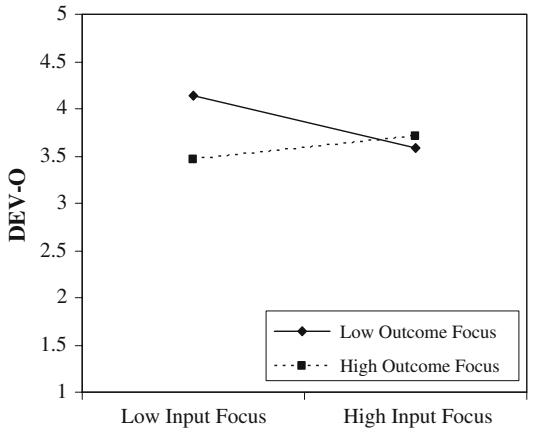

Fig. 5 The interaction of input and outcome focus in the prediction of organizational deviance

1b, 1c and 1e. Indeed, employees with a strong input orientation, because of their giving, altruistic and considerate tendencies, seem more likely to perceive higher levels of task performance and citizenship behavior and lower levels of deviance. Results show, however, that these benevolent tendencies make little difference when individuals have a strong outcome focus, as high levels of outcome orientation attenuated the effects of input focus. In line with recent research (Davison and Bing 2008), individuals with a high input focus and a low outcome focus contribute more to an organization in the form of task and citizenship performance, and they engage in fewer acts of deviant behavior.

The results from the second set of hypotheses (H2a–H2e) revealed that input and outcome orientation interacted to predict outcome-related criteria. Providing support for Hypotheses 2a and 2d, the relationship of outcome focus with outcomes was positive for those individuals with a low input focus. The results support the belief that the effects of outcome orientation on outcomes depend on one's level of input orientation. Figure 6 indicates that an outcome focus exerts a positive influence on perceptions of job security satisfaction when individuals are low in input focus. This finding suggests that when individuals are more concerned with looking out for their own interests than with contributing to the organization, the effects of an outcome focus on job security satisfaction are more pronounced. The same positive effect was found for social satisfaction among individuals with low input orientations. Interestingly, however, outcome orientation exhibited a negative relationship with social satisfaction for those individuals who were high in input focus (see Fig. 7). This form of relationship was not expected, but it clearly illustrates the utility of employing a two-dimensional measure of equity sensitivity. If the two regression lines were collapsed, the relation between outcome focus and social satisfaction would be essentially nil. Results from the

Table 3 Hierarchical regression analysis—outcome criteria

Variable/model	Satisfaction-security				Satisfaction-pay				Satisfaction-growth			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Controls												
Age	−.09	−.06	−.06	−.05	.12	.17	.17	.17	.05	.11	.11	.11
Gender	.03	.03	.00	.01	.04	−.02	−.03	−.03	.03	−.08	−.09	−.09
Race	−.09	−.09	−.08	−.11	−.04	−.04	−.04	−.05	−.14	−.18*	−.18*	−.18*
Job experience	.19	.18	.18	.12	−.20	−.21*	−.21*	−.23*	−.12	−.14	−.14	−.14
Current employment	.05	.06	.06	.10	.01	−.02	−.02	−.00	.02	.03	.03	.03
Big 5 and social desirability												
Conscientiousness		.05	.03	.06		.13	.12	.13		.03	.02	.02
Agreeableness		−.05	−.06	−.07		.26*	.25*	.24*		.22*	.19	.19
Extraversion		.06	.06	.09		.11	.11	.12		.22*	.21*	.21*
Neuroticism		−.01	.01	.04		.03	.03	.04		.12	.11	.11
Openness		−.04	−.06	−.08		−.11	−.11	−.11		−.13	−.14	−.14
Social desirability (SD)		−.01	.02	.06		−.11	−.10	−.09		−.07	−.06	−.06
Social desirability (IM)		.10	.12	.13		−.13	−.13	−.13		.17	.17	.17
Equity sensitivity												
Input focus (IF)			.17*	1.20**			.05	.38			.11	.11
Outcome focus (OF)			.16	1.51**			.00	.42			.01	−.00
Interaction												
IF × OF				−1.89**				−.59				.01
Overall F	1.32	0.71	1.51	2.09	0.77	1.37	1.19	1.17	.88	2.07	1.93	1.79
Total R^2	.04	.05	.12	.17*	.02	.09	.10	.10	.03	.14*	.15*	.15*
ΔR^2		.01	.07**	.05**		.07	.00	.01		.11**	.01	.00

Variable/model	Satisfaction-social				Satisfaction-supervisor			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Controls								
Age	−.10	−.03	−.04	−.03	.04	.07	.07	.07
Gender	.17*	.11	.09	.09	.07	.05	.04	.04
Race	−.05	−.06	−.05	−.08	−.15*	−.19*	−.18*	−.19*
Job experience	.05	.01	.00	−.05	−.07	−.06	−.07	−.07
Current employment	−.05	−.06	−.06	−.02	−.19*	−.19*	−.19*	−.19*
Big 5 and social desirability								
Conscientiousness		.05	.04	.06		−.00	−.01	−.01
Agreeableness		.19	.13	.12		.08	.07	.07
Extraversion		.13	.11	.13		.05	.05	.05
Neuroticism		.07	.06	.09		−.15	−.14	−.14
Openness		−.05	−.06	−.07		−.06	−.07	−.07
Social desirability (SD)		.03	.03	.07		−.10	−.09	−.08
Social desirability (IM)		−.04	−.05	−.05		.18	.19*	.19*
Equity sensitivity								
Input focus (IF)			.23**	1.11**			.09	.23
Outcome focus (OF)			−.03	1.11*			.06	.26
Interaction								
IF × OF				−1.61*				−.27
Overall F	1.44	1.22	1.62	2.01	2.94	2.43	2.28	2.13
Total R^2	.04	.08	.13	.16*	.08*	.16**	.17**	.17*
ΔR^2		.04	.04*	.04**		.07	.01	.00

$N = 172$. Standardized regression coefficients are shown. ΔR^2 totals may not sum exactly to R^2 totals because of rounding error

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 4 Hierarchical regression analysis—original ESI

Variable/model	Input criteria					Outcome criteria				
	Task	OCB-I	OCB-O	DEV-I	DEV-O	Security	Pay	Growth	Social	Supervisor
Controls										
Age	−.16	.04	−.08	−.19	.05	−.06	.17	.12	−.02	.08
Gender	.21*	.19*	.17	−.17*	−.18*	.03	−.02	−.08	.12	.06
Race	.02	−.01	.04	−.00	.05	−.09	−.04	−.18*	−.06	−.19*
Job experience	.37**	.12	.25*	.10	−.26*	.17	−.21	−.15	−.01	−.08
Current employment	−.15	−.08	−.04	.15	.03	.06	−.02	.03	−.06	−.19*
Big 5 and social desirability										
Conscientiousness	−.05	−.13	.11	−.08	−.10	.04	.13	.02	.04	−.01
Agreeableness	.09	.04	.02	−.09	−.14	−.07	.26*	.18	.14	.05
Extraversion	−.01	.19*	−.06	.12	.02	.05	.11	.19*	.09	.03
Neuroticism	−.02	−.07	−.11	−.01	.02	−.03	.03	.09	.03	−.17
Openness	.01	.09	.07	.10	.02	−.04	−.11	−.13	−.04	−.06
Social desirability (SD)	−.13	−.06	−.13	−.08	.08	−.02	−.11	−.08	.02	−.11
Social desirability (IM)	−.07	.09	−.02	−.25**	−.06	.09	−.13	.15	−.06	.17
Equity sensitivity										
Original ESI	.09	.21**	.04	−.11	−.05	.06	−.00	.13	.16	.09
Overall F	1.88	3.42	1.22	3.62	1.97	0.69	1.25	2.09	1.42	2.35
Total R^2	.13*	.22**	.09	.23**	.14*	.05	.09	.15*	.11	.16**
ΔR^2	.01	.03**	.00	.01	.00	.00	.00	.01	.02	.01

$N = 172$. Standardized regression coefficients from Step 3 are shown. Step 1 and 2 coefficients are identical to those reported in Tables 2 and 3

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

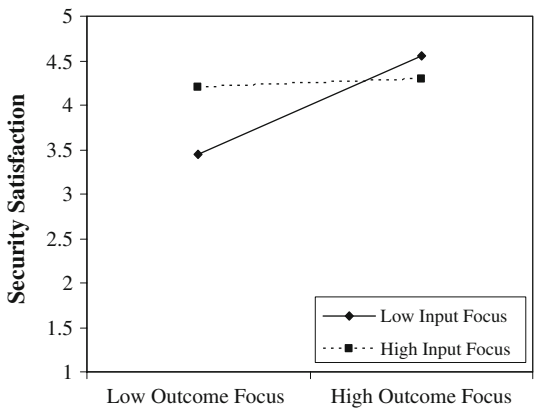

Fig. 6 The interaction of input and outcome focus in the prediction of security satisfaction

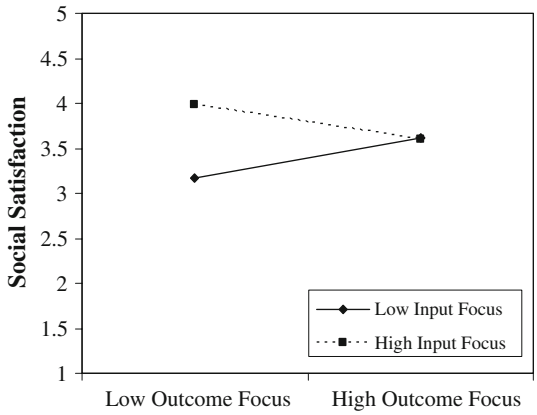

Fig. 7 The interaction of input and outcome focus in the prediction of social satisfaction

regression analyses employing the original ESI confirm this point, as Huseman et al.'s (1985) original measure did not significantly predict any of the specific satisfactions. This finding reveals that individuals with a high input focus and low outcome focus reported the highest social satisfaction. This is not altogether surprising, as those individuals who are more willing to help others in need are likely to have better relationships with fellow coworkers.

The results from Hypothesis 3 revealed that the original ESI only significantly predicted one of the 10 dependent variables, OCB-I. By contrast, the interaction of the single-stimulus input- and outcome-focused measures significantly explained 6 of the 10 criteria. For these six criteria, the two-dimensional measure contributed between 8 and 15% of variance explained (including main and interaction effects). All told, the new measure provided more than a

100% increase in prediction above and beyond that of the control variables. Conversely, it appears that, in the current study, the original ESI had little influence on job performance and satisfaction beyond the effects of demographic variables, social desirability, and the Big 5.

The results of the current study make important theoretical and practical contributions. Building on the work of Davison and Bing (2008), the findings demonstrate that separate dimensions of input and outcome focus interact to explain variance in individuals' satisfaction and job performance, even beyond the effects of the Big 5 and social desirability. Prior research has shown how person characteristics can interact to predict important work behavior, including helping (King et al. 2005) and interpersonal performance (Barrick et al. 2005). In this study, we showed that different leanings toward equity can also interact to predict workplace attitudes and behaviors. The current study enhances our understanding of equity theory in general, and equity sensitivity in particular, by drawing attention to the multidimensional nature of the equity sensitivity construct, as a multidimensional measure demonstrated superior predictive ability than a more established, unidimensional measure, the ESI.

The findings of the current study also provide initial empirical support for Davison and Bing's (2008) revised taxonomy of equity sensitivity. Whereas a ratio has been historically used as the basis for evaluating equity, employing independent dimensions and investigating their interaction seems more appropriate to assess the categories contained in their 2 × 2 typology (see Fig. 1). Moreover, relationships long proposed by equity sensitivity researchers were made more explicit when considering, for example, benevolent individuals to have both a high input orientation and a low outcome orientation. Perhaps this multidimensional framework will shed light on future research examining individual differences in equity perceptions, as well as the role of indifference in the workplace.

Limitations and Future Research

Although the current study makes a contribution to the literature, it should be understood with certain limitations in mind. First, the current study employs a student sample. Though respondents were adults working more than 30 h per week, perhaps individuals who consider themselves students first and employees second would perceive and react to inequity differently than non-student employees. Indeed, much equity sensitivity research has stressed the importance of employing participants from the labor force (Huseman et al. 1987; King et al. 1993). To the degree that differences exist, future research could investigate the nature of the equity perceptions individuals hold in non-university settings.

Another limitation pertains to the study's sample. Roughly half the respondents (49%) were not currently employed at the time of data collection. As such, they were instructed to respond with respect to their last job. Though this (in many cases) referred to recent summer employment, which ended 3 months prior to data collection, memory constraints and availability biases are likely to have existed (Fredrickson and Kahneman 1993). To address this concern, we performed moderated hierarchical regression analyses with and without a dummy variable assessing the effects of current employment. None of the regression results differed, and current employment was only significantly related to one of the criteria, supervisor satisfaction.

Also, because this study relied solely on same-source, self-reported data, the results could have been inflated due to common method variance. However, we attempted to reduce the effects of bias by following some of the suggestions advanced by Podsakoff et al. (2003). In particular, we separated our survey administrations over time, collecting predictor variables approximately 2 weeks before the criterion measures, and we included two measures of social desirability to control for intentional faking and unintentional response distortion. Still, future research might benefit from responses collected from multiple sources to diminish concerns of common method variance.

Several additional avenues for future research remain. For instance, continued refinement of equity sensitivity measures appears to be needed. Davison and Bing (2008) provide a unique conceptualization and measure, but the dimensionality of other existing scales, such as the Equity Preference Questionnaire (Sauley and Bedeian 2000), remains to be scrutinized. Indeed, dimensionality is an issue worthy of further exploration (see, e.g., Foote and Harmon 2006), as firm conclusions cannot be drawn from the limited amount of empirical evidence available. Identifying and testing relations among various organizational criteria with improved measures may yield greater insight into the nature of equity sensitivity.

Future research should also assess the impact of equity sensitivity in workgroups, as well as potential interactions between equity sensitivity and a broad range of work attitudes and situations already established as correlates. Collective perceptions of equity seem, at least ostensibly, similar to justice climate. As prior research has shown that group power distance can moderate relations between procedural justice climate and individual-level outcomes (Yang et al. 2007), perhaps a collective sensitivity to equity can exert multilevel effects as well.

Conclusion

In this study, we examined separate measures of input and outcome orientation with respect to input- and outcome-focused criteria to understand the dimensionality of the equity sensitivity construct. Despite much published research that employs the most widely used measure of equity sensitivity, the ESI, findings have been largely inconsistent with the original tenets of equity sensitivity theory. Thus, this study represents an attempt to further explicate equity sensitivity by jointly considering theoretically different dimensions of the construct. Moreover, we examined the interactive nature of separate dimensions of equity sensitivity—input and outcome focus—in response to research that suggests these dimensions may differentially impact equity-relevant attitudes and behaviors in the workplace.

In an increasingly competitive and globalized business environment, organizations must strive not only for satisfied and productive employees, but they must recognize the impact of those individuals who feel fairly (or unfairly) treated at work. Such perceptions of fairness can, for instance, build trust and commitment, improve job performance, and foster customer satisfaction and loyalty (Cropanzano et al. 2007). Thus, it is critical that organizational scholars and practitioners understand how individuals perceive and react to equity. The aim of the current study was to extend our understanding of equity sensitivity by demonstrating how the effects of input and outcome orientations on input- and outcome-focused criteria may vary across employees with differing preferences and tolerances for equity. A more refined understanding of equity sensitivity can provide insights into the factors affecting important work outcomes which, in turn, can impact organizational success.

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